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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

8 July 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Initial Period of a Modern War

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article by the Chief of the Soviet Operations Directorate states that the existing concept of the initial period of war has become archaic and bereft of all practical meaning. The presence within the armed forces of numerous means of attack and the feasibility of applying the whole complex of means in various sequences and in any desired combination predicate the possibility of several variants for the beginning of a war. The possible periods of a modern war, including non-nuclear, nuclear and final, are characterized, and it is concluded that under modern conditions primary attention should be concentrated on ensuring the readiness of the country and the armed forces for conducting a brief nuclear war. This article appeared in Issue No. 1 (80) for 1967.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned the [redacted] Codeword [redacted]

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William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): On the Question of the Initial Period of a Modern War

SOURCE Documentary
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 1 (80) for 1967 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is Colonel-General M. Povaliy. This article by the Chief of the Soviet Operations Directorate states that the existing concept of the initial period of war has become archaic and bereft of all practical meaning. The presence within the armed forces of numerous means of attack and the feasibility of applying the whole complex of means in various sequences and in any desired combination predicate the possibility of several variants for the beginning of a war. The possible periods of a modern war, including non-nuclear, nuclear and final, are characterized, and it is concluded that under modern conditions primary attention should be concentrated on ensuring the readiness of the country and the armed forces for conducting a brief nuclear war.

End of Summary

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Comment:

Colonel-General M. Povaliy was First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces for Operations. He wrote 'Military Strategy and Economics', Military Thought, No. 4, 1971, the RESTRICTED version, (FIRLT-313/00791-73, 29 June 1973). The SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.

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On the Question of the Initial Period of a Modern War

by

Colonel-General M. Povaliy

The rapid progress of science and technology causes an unusually intensive expansion of the sphere of military-technical and operational-strategic problems and requires solving many questions in a new fashion. Basic qualitative changes in the materiel base for the conduct of war, occurring usually every six to eight years and accompanied by important advances in military theory and practice, evoke corresponding forms and methods for the conduct of armed conflict and give rise to a series of new concepts, understandings, and terms. Some categories of the military art lose their significance, while others acquire completely different meaning and new content.

In these circumstances the task is to determine the urgent problems on a timely basis, to find an advisable solution to them, and to proceed boldly and without hesitation to the review of individual tenets as to whether they are justified by practice or come into conflict with the combat capabilities of modern means of armed combat.

V. I. Lenin, in his "Letters on Tactics", instructed Communists: "...it is necessary to master that unchallengeable truth that the Marxist must consider real life and precise facts of reality instead of continuing to cling to yesterday's theory..." (Collected Works, Volume 31, page 134). These Leninist precepts sound timely today as never before.

Becoming particularly important at the present time is the possible division of a future war into strategic periods. The urgency of such a formulation is caused by the fact that the views held until recently, according to which it was considered characteristic of an atomic war to have an initial period of decisive importance to the course and outcome of the war, have already begun to contradict objective reality and seriously hamper the development of the theory and practice of military affairs.

It is well known that the preliminary, strictly scientific determination of the possible periods of war and the detailed elaboration of their content and role constitute an indispensable condition of strategic planning and of purposeful preparation of the armed forces and the whole country for war. Scientific foreknowledge of the probable course of the

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war and its expected sequence of development is expressed in this division into strategic periods. The more closely this division reflects actual reality, the fewer surprises will be encountered at the beginning of the war and the greater will be the grounds for counting on its successful conclusion.

Consideration of a new division of war into strategic periods is, to begin with, closely connected to the theory of the initial period of war and with the necessity for its critical review in the light of new political, economic, and particularly, military, conditions.

As is known, the initial period of a war is historically a transient categorization. It reflects only a specific form of the beginning of a war, the specifically developing process by which armed combat is expanded during a specific period of time, which can take place only under certain historical conditions.

The concept of "the initial period of a war" was not used and could not be used for the wars of slave-holding and feudal socio-economic systems, because the aims of such wars were usually achieved then by the combat operations of standing regular or militia armies, as a rule, in one or several general engagements. The necessity for singling out an initial period did not arise till the beginning of the twentieth century, in the era of imperialism, when conditions for the initiation and conduct of wars fundamentally changed. The level of development of productive forces provided an unprecedentedly high status of the materiel-technical base; for the mass equipping of armies, there became available machine technology, mechanical means of transport and communications, automatic weapons, combat aircraft, tanks, mortars, and submarines. All of this taken together led to a manifold increase in the scale of war and in its territorial scope, duration, and intensity. The role of economic and morale factors grew sharply.

Under these conditions the achievement of war goals already required a series of operations and the participation of multimillion-man armies. However, not one state, not even the most developed, was strong enough to maintain such armies permanently in peacetime. Therefore, for the conduct of war it became necessary to fully mobilize and move forward into the theaters of military operations, additional forces, often several times greater in numbers than the original grouping of troops and in some instances comprising ten to twenty percent of the country's population. In order to maintain and use such forces, the whole economy of a state had to be reorganized on a war footing, usually already during the course of

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military operations. Prior to the completion of these measures, the armed conflict and the nature of the strategic tasks being accomplished had specific features which provided the grounds for speaking of a special, initial period of war.

Thus, of determining importance in singling out an initial period in a war was the circumstance that because of the new conditions of the entry of countries into war and of the deployment of multimillion-man armed forces, the beginning of a war was distinguished by the specific character of the conduct of combat operations and by strategic features not repeated in the course of the war. These features included the increased urgency of the fight to seize and retain the strategic initiative, the relative shortage of forces in theaters of military operations, the lower operational densities of forces than in the past, the continued formation of a strategic front, the lack of necessary combat experience among the troops and command personnel, etc.

With the development of the means of armed combat, naturally, the content of the initial period of war changed, as did its role: the results of combat operations by forces in precisely this period were exerting an ever greater influence on the course and outcome of the war.

Thus, on the eve of 1914 the initial period of war was understood to be the time from the declaration of war to the commencement of operations by the forces of the first strategic echelon. Within this period, the mobilization, initial concentration, and strategic deployment of the armed forces were accomplished, and combat operations of limited scale were carried out by the covering troops on the state borders. Under this definition, the initial period of the First World War lasted for 15-16 days on the Western Front and for 18-21 days on the Russian-German-Austrian Front, after which border-area engagements involving large forces of both sides developed.

Toward the end of the 1930's and the beginning of the 1940's, the development of production in the leading countries made it possible to carry out an important technical rebuilding of armies. The quantity of aircraft increased, and the quality of aircraft improved. The first tank and airborne units were established. The firepower of the armed forces was increased. The weight of a divisional volley increased several times over. The opportunity appeared for having in peacetime invasion armies capable of beginning war suddenly and immediately developing active military operations. At the same time, the dependence of the conduct of war on economics grew. The rapid and organized conversion of production to a war

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footing assumed great importance. The threat of large personnel and equipment losses predetermined the need for shortening the periods of mobilization expansion of the first strategic echelons of the armed forces, and for carrying out subsequent mobilization measures, in effect, throughout the war.

Our military theory has evaluated all of these questions essentially correctly. However, the specific conditions of possible conduct of armed combat in the initial period of a war have not been fully taken into account. It was considered, it is true, that at the very start of war, armed combat would acquire wide scope and would employ active forms, especially in the air, but on the ground the development initially of border-area engagements between invading armies and covering armies with relatively limited goals was expected. It was assumed that during this time complete mobilization of the armed forces would be accomplished and the conditions established for the commitment to the engagement of the main forces of the first strategic echelon and, later, subsequent strategic echelons as well.

It is in accordance with this that the content of the concept of the initial period of a war has been determined. In the operational dictionary published by the General Staff Academy of the Red Army in 1940 it was stated: "Wars today are usually not declared--they are simply begun by enemies already prepared to one degree or another for action. Therefore, today the initial period of war must be understood as being the period of time from the start of military operations up to the entry into operations of the main body of the armed forces"* (underlined by us - M.P.).

As may be readily noted, such an understanding of the initial period of war, while reflecting several new elements in military art, has nevertheless failed to take into account the possibilities of the antagonists already achieving major strategic results in the initial operations. The possibility of early deployment of the main forces has been lost sight of, as well as the new conditions for conducting mobilization, particularly the danger of its disruption or disorganization by the enemy. Full consideration has not been given to the changes that have occurred in the arrangement of military-political forces, the increased economic capabilities of countries, and the appearance of qualitatively different means for a rapid and deep offensive in the form of large formations of tank troops and powerful aviation.

* Operational Dictionary. Published by the General Staff Academy, 1940, page 46.

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In the final analysis, this had a negative effect on strategic war planning. In our plans worked out prior to the start of the war, for instance, it was presumed that the accomplishment of complete mobilization and the concentration of the main forces would require about 15-20 days, during which time the covering armies would contain the invading enemy troops or, under favorable circumstances, deliver counterattacks against them, press them, and thus create conditions for completing the concentration of the main forces and their transition to an all-out offensive. However, in the course of the Great Fatherland War, such a sequence of development of armed conflict was disrupted. ✓

In reality, great significance has been acquired by such factors as early complete mobilization and deployment of the armed forces, sudden attack by large enemy air forces, and breaking into the enemy's first strategic echelon by the rapid conduct of highly mobile operations. ✓

Preparing for its lightning war against the Soviet Union, the German fascist military command did not single out a special initial period: the complete defeat of our country was envisaged in the course of one brief campaign. All of the armed forces designated for delivery of the attack had been completely mobilized and, during the course of several months (still prior to the beginning of the war), had been moved to the east and deployed in accordance with their assigned tasks. The German economy by this time had also been completely converted to provide for the needs of war. As a result of this, the fascist army had the capability to immediately establish a decisive superiority on the main axes and to develop successful attacks along the entire length of the Soviet-German front. ✓

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Our armed forces, during the initial period of the war, had to repel the attack of superior enemy forces, form a strategic combat front, establish and deploy strategic groupings of troops by axes, carry out the entire bulk of mobilization measures, prepare strategic reserves in the rear, convert the whole economy to a war footing, and carry out massive national economic, strategic and mobilization shipments.

On the whole, the experience of the Second World War showed that having attack forces already prepared in peacetime, plus the advance execution of many preparatory measures which were formerly carried out during the course of a war, allowed the aggressor to inflict defeat upon a series of countries within a short period of time. For example, Poland and France were overwhelmed by the Germans in the course of a few weeks. ✓ However, in combat with a strong enemy, the aggressor was unable to achieve

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victory with one blow, since the means of waging war did not allow this and the economy deep inside a country remained essentially beyond effective enemy action. True, strategic (long-range) aviation dealt palpable strikes on individual economic and administrative-political centers, but it was not capable of destroying the military-economic potential of a country. Therefore, the results of combat operations in the initial period of the war, while exerting tremendous influence on its entire further course, nonetheless could not predetermine its outcome.

In the early postwar years, the initial period of war was the center of attention of historians, theoreticians, and practitioners of military affairs. The basic reason making this period a primary problem of military art in the 1950's lay in the further development of the weapons of armed combat and the change in the conditions of its conduct. The complete motorization and mechanization of armies, the improvement of tanks and aircraft and, primarily the creation of atomic weapons greatly increased the strategic capabilities of armed forces. As a result, favorable conditions were created for achieving in the first operations decisive strategic results, which could predetermine not only the further course but also the outcome of an entire war.

Despite all this, however, brief forms could not yet be adopted for war in the 1950's. For a relatively long time, its decisive means remained conventional branches of the armed forces, having at their disposal a comparatively limited quantity of atomic warheads and the means for their delivery to the target. The capabilities of the first strategic echelon were therefore insufficient for achieving the main goals of a war and for ensuring the total defeat of the enemy within a short period of time. The beginning of a war was not and could not be the culmination point of strategic efforts. During the course of military and economic mobilization, it was necessary to field subsequent (second and third) echelons of completely mobilized and equipped troops, whose commitment to action was the only possible means of accomplishing the main tasks of the war.

This requirement remained in force even when reserves of tactical atomic weapons had grown but sufficiently powerful strategic nuclear forces had not yet been created. The lack of the latter made it impossible to count upon the simultaneous destruction of the military-economic potential and the armed forces of the enemy. In this connection, it was necessary to focus on the successive accomplishment of strategic tasks through the conduct of a series of strategic operations.

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By analogy with past wars, there was every reason to consider two periods in a future war also: the initial period and the subsequent period. However, the time boundaries of the initial period came to be determined not on the basis of the time required for the establishment of certain groupings of the armed forces and their commitment to action, as previously, but for the most part on the basis of the time in which it was necessary to achieve the strategic goals and tasks being accomplished by the troops in the course of armed combat. Thus, the initial period of war came to be understood as the time interval from the moment of the war's outbreak to the achievement of the immediate strategic goals of the war. It was considered that this period would be the most important, its basic content being the immediate delivery of powerful atomic strikes against the enemy, the simultaneous repelling of his air assault, and the development and conduct of active, highly mobile offensive actions in land and sea theaters in the form of strategic operations. During this same time, it was contemplated to carry out measures for accomplishing the complete mobilization of the first strategic echelon of the armed forces, for the mobilization expansion of subsequent echelons, and for conversion of the national economy to production in accordance with wartime plans. It was also intended that from the very beginning of a war the maximum quantity of combat-ready forces and means would be brought into the conduct of combat operations, with constant intensification of their efforts through the deployment of new formations.

During the subsequent period, the achievement of the final goals of the war was contemplated.

For the 1950's and early 1960's, such a formulation of the question of the initial period of a war was completely natural, since it fully corresponded with the level of development of the means of armed combat. However, in the past 5-6 years, the qualitative condition of the armed forces of the greatest world powers has changed sharply. In the Soviet Union and the United States, there have appeared strategic nuclear forces, whose destructive power, effectiveness and speed of action cannot be compared with any other means of armed combat.

The presence within the armed forces of numerous means of attack--strategic and operational, nuclear and conventional--and also the probability of applying the whole complex of means in various sequences and in any desired combination depending on the military-political situation, predetermine the possibility of several variants for the beginning of a war. Thus, war today can begin immediately with unlimited use by the opponents of all means of combat, including (even) strategic nuclear weapons.

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It's possible that at the beginning the war may be waged for a while using only conventional means and tactical nuclear weapons. Finally, it is not excluded that military operations will begin and will be conducted for a certain period of time using only conventional means. Each of these variants requires its own approach to the question of the initial period of a war.

This period can be discerned to some extent in a local war, and in a world war--when it begins and is conducted for some time using only conventional weapons or conventional weapons and some tactical nuclear weapons. However, the essence, time frame, and content of the initial period under these conditions will obviously differ fundamentally from the concepts formulated in the 1950's which determined the theory of the initial period of a nuclear war until recently. ENGL

First of all, this period can last only a very short time under any circumstances, and only to the moment when the opposing sides go over to the unlimited use of nuclear weapons. During this period the most that can be achieved are only operational-strategic goals in some theaters of military operations. Consequently, from the nature of the tasks accomplished and from the results achieved, the initial period obviously can no longer be considered the decisive period of a war. Nevertheless, in the course of it intense military operations will be conducted on the ground, in the air, and on the sea, with the participation of large forces. Both sides will strive to inflict destruction on the opposing groupings of troops of the other side's first strategic echelon, particularly his nuclear means deployed ready for use in theaters of military operations. Along with this, our armed forces must fully exploit the favorable opportunities, arising from superiority over the enemy in ground forces, for the rapid overcoming of nuclear minefields and prepared defense lines and the capture of important areas along the main axes.

On the whole, military operations in the period under consideration can undoubtedly exert a considerable influence on the operational-strategic situation, particularly on the capabilities of both sides for subsequent effective use of nuclear weapons and on the entire subsequent course of the war. In any event, the greater the success achieved in this period, the more favorable will be the situation of our armed forces and the entire country at the time of the transition to nuclear war and the more destructive for the enemy will be the strike of our strategic means in the theaters of military operations. It is therefore very important even under present conditions to have mass armed forces capable of successfully operating in the first days of a war, using only conventional weapons or, in case of necessity, tactical nuclear weapons.

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As already noted, it is possible to treat these operations, in a certain sense and with the specified stipulations, within the concept of the initial period of a war, as long as they are carried out in the special situation of a highly critical battle for the strategic initiative, in which both sides strive to avoid delay in committing nuclear weapons to action and at the same time carry out major governmental and military measures for the conversion of the country from peacetime to wartime conditions. In particular, to a certain extent it will be possible to carry out the conversion of the economy to war production, mobilization, and evacuation of the population from large urban centers, and to take other measures for defense of the country against possible enemy nuclear strikes. It is, of course, difficult to count on such measures being carried out without hindrance. Therefore, all efforts should be applied to completing at least the first stage of mobilization and the moving forward of the main bulk of the reserves in the shortest possible time, since these measures could be interrupted at any moment by transition to nuclear means.

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If strategic nuclear weapons are not used, then some features characteristic of the initial period remain to some extent valid.

In contrast to this, in a nuclear world war which begins immediately, with the unlimited use of all nuclear means, first of all strategic means, the initial period completely loses its independent significance, and is deprived of its substance and any limitations as to time or space.

Armed forces today already can utilize enormous reserves of strategic and operational-tactical nuclear warheads with maximum intensity in attempting to inflict on the enemy the greatest possible destruction, literally, in the first hours and days of a war. However, as is known, the development of strategic means of combat continues at a constantly accelerating pace. Their proportion in the armed forces of the major world powers becomes more and more significant. Accordingly, the possible results of their use increase, and, naturally, the time limits for accomplishing strategic and large operational tasks decrease. Under these conditions it is hardly possible to expect that a nuclear world war will be of long duration. On the basis of the objective prerequisites created by the new weapons, it will most likely be brief.

In the past, large countries, relying on their surviving economic base, could repeatedly rebuild their armed forces during the course of a war. In a nuclear world war, such a possibility is sharply limited because of the simultaneous destruction of the armed forces and the economy. It is

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understandable that if in the past it was required to capture all or most of the enemy's territory in order to achieve the primary strategic goals and deprive the enemy of his economic capabilities for waging war, at present it obviously will be sufficient to seize only isolated surviving vitally important areas, since those areas which will be subjected to strikes of strategic nuclear weapons will lose their former military-economic importance.

In this there appears a qualitatively new aspect of nuclear war--its culminating moment coincides in time with its beginning. In such a situation, it is already difficult to delimit some sort of special initial period, and there is, indeed, no practical necessity for doing so.

Under present-day conditions, all nuclear war can be reduced to committing to action fully combat-ready means, principally strategic nuclear weapons, and to exchanging powerful and destructive rocket/nuclear strikes in the space of a very short time. These actions will ensure the achievement of the main (and not merely the most immediate) strategic goals of the war and determine the subsequent military-political situation of the world.

All of this makes it necessary to recognize that the existing concept of the initial period of war is becoming archaic. It was characteristic of former wars, which were more or less lengthy, and it reflected the state of the materiel base for armed combat of that time. In a brief nuclear war with mutual use of strategic nuclear weapons, the initial period is completely swallowed up in the overall course of the war.

It is thus no accident that every attempt to apply the existing concept of the initial period to a nuclear world war leads to serious contradictions. Thus, according to the accepted views, the initial period of a war lasts until the achievement of the immediate strategic goals. Meanwhile, not only these goals, but also the main goals of the war, may have been already achieved as a result of the first nuclear strike. It is considered that the first strategic operations in the theaters of military operations to achieve the immediate goals of the war will be conducted within the framework of an initial period. However, such operations in a nuclear war are conceived to be conducted to the full depth of the theaters. The conduct of these operations must complete the total defeat of the enemy in each theater and ensure the capture of all vitally important areas of his territory, that is, the accomplishment of the main tasks of the war. Therefore, in duration and in planned goals, the first

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strategic operations outgrow the bounds of the initial period as presently understood.

In characterizing the initial period, some authors take as its basis the battle of the opposing sides to attain their immediate strategic goals, while other authors take the composition of the forces and means committed. Some contend that the initial period ends with the commitment to the engagement of subsequent strategic echelons, others, that it ends with the first fundamental turning point in the strategic situation. Some allow that generally it is possible to manage without defining time limits of the initial period, etc.

It is impossible to resolve these and other contradictions while holding to the tenets of the existing theory of the initial period. Sometimes, it is true, it is proposed to regard the first two or three days or even the first few hours as the initial period of a nuclear war. However, the time factor is only one indicator, and not the decisive one at that. The most important thing is that in conducting a war with unlimited use of nuclear means of destruction, the main strategic tasks will be accomplished, not successively, as in the past, but simultaneously and at the very beginning of the war. With this, the forces of the first strategic echelon (the strategic rocket forces, groups of forces and border military districts, air defense forces of the country, and forces of the navy) may provide sufficient efforts by themselves for their achievement. On the economic side, the capability for waging such a war and its success must be prepared for in advance in peacetime.

With the indicated conditions applicable to a nuclear war, all of the elements which determined the initial period of war theory as formed in the 1950's disappear. The theory is bereft of all practical meaning. In addition, preservation of the term "initial period of war" involuntarily orients our military personnel, not toward the future, but toward the past, weakens their attention to measures ensuring maximum combat readiness of the troops, and leads in many instances to an incorrect evaluation of the role of the various branches of the armed forces, particularly that of the strategic nuclear forces, in modern warfare. No matter how much the decisive role of the initial period is emphasized, recognition of its existence in nuclear war leads some generals and officers (and sometimes even workers of central government planning organs) to the incorrect idea that the war is only beginning with this period, that the main military operations are still in the future, and that in case the first operations are unsuccessful, some sort of opportunity will appear in the subsequent

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period to change the course of the war (as was the case in the past). This already represents a definite danger for us.

The existing concept of the content of the initial period applied to nuclear war actually conveys nothing. The concept is not corroborated either by the experience of operational-strategic war games or of operational exercises carried out by us in recent years. In fact, these exercises studied combat operations not confined to the established division of war into periods. Our probable enemies have long since abandoned the concept of the initial period in their actual strategic planning and training of the armed forces.

If we analyze the actual conditions for conducting armed combat in a war with unlimited use of nuclear weapons, and if we proceed from operational training experience, then we must recognize as correct a fundamentally different division into periods.

Characterizing the content of a strategic operation in a theater of military operations, Minister of Defense Marshal R. Ya. Malinovskiy, in his analysis of one of the strategic war games in 1965, noted the possibility of dividing it into three periods, namely: a period of non-nuclear operations, a period of decisive nuclear operations, and a period of concluding operations. At the same time, he pointed out that with certain conditions this division into periods can be extended also to a modern war as a whole.

A characteristic feature of this new division into periods is that it takes into account all currently operative political, economic, and military factors, and proceeds not from a single variant of the beginning of war but rather from the possibility of its breaking out in various forms. There is also the consideration that such an extremely complex and unexplored phenomenon as nuclear war cannot be reduced to a stereotype. Therefore, the armed forces must be ready to carry out successful military operations regardless of the conditions under which the war begins and progresses, possessing for this purpose the appropriate means, organization, and training.

Naturally, there could be no question, in past wars, of coincidence between the periods of a war and the periods of strategic operations comprising a part of that war. Under modern conditions, however, war as a whole and strategic operations in the main theaters of military operations will, in essence, develop jointly in time. Therefore, the periods of a strategic operation will, in principle, be characteristic of the whole war.

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However, even so, the two cannot be completely identified with each other. This can only be done conditionally, since the content of the periods of a war is broader than that of periods of operations.

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First of all, war is a much wider concept than a strategic operation in a theater of military operations. In addition to such operations, war includes the operations of strategic nuclear forces in distant areas, the repelling of enemy nuclear strikes against the internal areas of our country, actions of the fleets on the ocean lines of communication, etc. All of these must be included in the content of the periods of a war. Secondly, with the completion of the first strategic operations in the theaters of military operations, individual military operations in their distinctive forms may still continue. Thirdly and finally, strategic operations may begin at different times in different theaters of military operations, because of which the periods of individual operations in the main and secondary theaters may not coincide in time or content.

Specifically how do the nature and content of the possible periods of a modern war present themselves?

The non-nuclear period may under certain conditions be the beginning of a war. This is especially probable when it is preceded by an armed conflict arising in one of the secondary theaters of military operations. This might even happen in the case of a clash of opposing sides in a main theater, the western theater of military operations. In Europe this period will obviously last for a relatively short time--from a few hours to a few days (two to three days, based on experience of exercises). A period of such a length is probable for the other theaters of military operations as well, since, in the event that both sides went over to the unlimited use of nuclear weapons in a main theater, one must assume that they will be used simultaneously in all of the other theaters as well. This is caused by the presence of powerful, aggressive military blocs and also by the deployment of groupings of the American armed forces in practically all of the theaters of military operations.

Along with this, one must take into account that there cannot be any non-nuclear period at all if a war would begin everywhere at once with the use of the entire arsenal of nuclear means.

In the course of the non-nuclear period, events, of course, may develop in different ways. It can't be excluded that active military operations will begin suddenly in all theaters or that various areas will be drawn into the sphere of armed conflict successively, with the

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commitment of even newer groupings of troops. At a certain stage, (enemy) forces may go over to the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons, which will immediately and sharply increase the dynamism, intensity, and decisiveness of the armed combat. Generally speaking, at any moment during this period there may develop a critical situation, in which the enemy decides to use all his nuclear means, including strategic. For this reason, our strategic and operational-tactical nuclear means must be in a constant state of high readiness for immediate actions. The assurance of such readiness, and also the ceaseless elaboration of the plans for their combat use in accordance with the changing situation, will constitute the most important task of the commands and staffs at all levels of leadership, starting with the General Staff and ending with the large unit commanders.

The non-nuclear period (if there is one) may in a certain sense be regarded as the initial period of a war, as has already been noted. We say "in a certain sense" because, in view of its short duration, the complete accomplishment of any large strategic tasks will scarcely be possible during this period. Most likely they will be accomplished only partially. Moreover, it will be very difficult to completely mobilize the armed forces and convert the economy to war production if all of these measures are not begun in advance in covert ways before the start of a war.

The nuclear period is the decisive period of the strategic operations and of the entire war. It may begin just after a non-nuclear period or the entire war may begin immediately with it. A most intensive exchange of nuclear strikes by the opposing sides will comprise the basic content of this period. At the same time, exceptionally intense combat operations by the antiaircraft, antimissile, and antispace defense forces for the disruption of enemy nuclear strikes will develop. Within the framework of strategic operations in the theaters of military operations, there will be conducted highly mobile offensive and defensive operations of the ground forces, in which the main role may be played by the rocket troops of the fronts, and the tank and mechanized troops. The fleets will carry out naval operations for the destruction of enemy carrier strike large units, submarine forces, and lines of communication. The forces and means of civilian defense will go into action.

It may be presumed that the nuclear period will be very short. It is not impossible that it will also be the one and only period of a war. During the course of it the sides will strive to achieve their main strategic goals, primarily through the use of nuclear weapons. In this matter, the first strike of strategic nuclear forces, using most of the combat ready means and the most powerful nuclear warheads, will acquire

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primary and decisive importance. Under especially favorable circumstances, the first nuclear strikes by the fronts and fleets may coincide with them in time. On the whole, the strategic and operational-tactical nuclear weapons will obviously be used most intensively in the course of the first few days. One can expect that subsequently there will be a sharp decline in the scale of use of these weapons, especially strategic means. However, by this time the armed forces will obviously have sustained colossal losses. Huge areas, both on distant continents and in the theaters of military operations, will be contaminated, as a result of which operations by surviving groupings of the ground forces on many axes of operations will be extremely difficult or altogether impossible. It will be impossible to count on carrying out mobilization measures on a large scale. In any case, the destruction of the main centers of the country, multimillion losses of people, and the disorganization of governmental and military control and of the transportation and communications systems, will greatly complicate mobilization. In view of this, mobilization may assume a special character and be conducted only in relatively untouched individual areas. As for the economy of the country, it will be disorganized to such a degree in the course of this period that for a long time it will be impossible to reestablish production, especially of complex military equipment.

On the whole, with the skilful and timely use by our side of the entire panoply of nuclear means in the decisive nuclear period, the war can be finished.

A concluding period is possible if the war is not ended in a preceding period. However, for the time being it is difficult to say anything definite about it. It will obviously be characterized by the fact that the main means of conducting combat actions will be conventional weapons (mainly those types for which production can be organized relatively easily during the course of a war) and a portion of the remaining nuclear weapons. In this period, strategic operations in the theaters of military operations may be completed, and subsequent individual operations by limited surviving forces in some areas and on individual axes may be conducted. Considerable influence on the outcome of combat operations in this period will be exerted by tank groupings and aviation, using conventional means, in conjunction with individual nuclear strikes. Strikes delivered by strategic and operational means will be particularly important. In any case, that side which is able to retain the larger quantity of nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles will obtain undoubted strategic advantages over the enemy.

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This in general is how we regard the division of a modern war into periods.

The establishment of a correct division of war into periods is not a simple formality. It is not at all a question of replacing certain terms, but of a fundamental elaboration of the possible nature of armed combat at a given stage of development of the technical means of waging it. It is obvious that modern war will not develop by a steady building up of intensity, but spasmodically, with unusually sharp transitions. Consequently, the nature of such a war cannot be defined simply. It will change repeatedly and extremely abruptly. In each period, armed combat will begin in a specific form and have its own special features, unique methods for fulfilling tasks, and special forms of conduct of military operations. Our troops, commanders, and staffs must be prepared for all of this right now. Everything required for successful operations in the course of all the possible periods of a war must be put into the organization, equipping, and training of our armed forces.

From the substance of the new division into periods, it follows that under modern conditions primary attention should be concentrated on ensuring the readiness of the country and the armed forces for conducting a brief nuclear war. Now it is necessary to consider within a different scheme of things the role of the economy and politics in war, the preparation and conduct of operations, and the seizure and retention of the strategic initiative. Obviously, the seizure of the strategic initiative will no longer be a one-time task; the opposing sides will face this task at the beginning of each period of the war, and it will be accomplished each time in different forms and by different methods.

On the whole, revision of the obsolete tenets regarding the initial period of war shows the necessity of concentrating our main efforts on the building of the armed forces, on the establishment and preparation in peacetime of those forces and means--especially the strategic nuclear forces and the air defense forces of the country--which would possess the most powerful means of destruction and high combat readiness, making possible their immediate commitment to action under any conditions of initiation of war by aggressors, and which would be capable of accomplishing all of the main strategic tasks of a war in the shortest possible time. The division of war into periods which is being considered requires not a stereotyped but an exceptionally flexible approach (taking into account the special features of each period) to the resolution of all the problems of operational and mobilization planning, preparation of the country and population for war, establishment and use of materiel reserves,

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and also the further development of troop training methods. In doing so, obviously, the main attention should be given to ensuring the readiness of the armed forces to accomplish tasks, above all in the decisive nuclear period. The strategic rocket forces and the air defense forces of the country especially must be at a high level of combat readiness. A delay of literally minutes in their commitment to action threatens serious complications for our armed forces and our country as a whole.

In conclusion, we should note that in considering the nature of a future war within the scheme of a new division into periods, we must certainly not assert that a war will develop in only a certain way and not otherwise, the more so since no one has yet felt the actual force of massive nuclear strikes and their effect on morale. One thing is clear: in determining the periods of a future war it is always necessary to proceed from specific historical conditions. The division into periods of a past war must not be applied mechanically to a future war--the conditions and methods of waging war are too different. Questions connected with determining the content of the periods of a modern war must be constantly studied and thoroughly researched. In theoretical work we must strive to attain a situation in which our scientific theory is vital, responds as much as possible to the requirements of the practical work of building the armed forces, and really lights the way for this work.

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